

# Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 9 May 1991

## *The week in statistics ...*

- First surplus on goods and services since January 1988 2
- Housing approvals continue to fall 3
- Exports in brief ... 3
- More than 1.8 million jobs started in 1989-90 4
- Industrial disputes in brief ... 4
- What bedevils Tasmanians 5
- All the week's releases 6
- Calendar of key releases up to 21 May 7
- The latest ... 7
  - key State indicators
  - key national indicators8

## First surplus on goods and services since January 1988



In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for March 1991 fell \$242 million to \$1,209 million. The fall was caused by a \$461 million increase in the merchandise trade surplus, a result which flowed through to the balance on goods and services where a surplus of \$231 million was the first monthly surplus recorded since January 1988.

The merchandise trade surplus is the seventh monthly surplus this financial year. Merchandise exports rose 1 per cent to \$4,477 million while imports fell 10 per cent to \$3,862 million, the lowest monthly result since September 1988. Partly offsetting the merchandise trade outcome, the net services and net income deficits rose \$140 million and \$52 million respectively, while the net unrequited transfers surplus fell \$27 million.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, CURRENT ACCOUNT			
\$ million			
		February 1991	March 1991
		Seasonally adjusted	Seasonally adjusted
	Original	Original	Original
Balance on merchandise trade	267	154	642
Net services	- 68	- 244	- 254
Net income	- 1,685	- 1,618	- 1,736
Net unrequited transfers	237	257	200
<i>Balance on current account</i>	<i>- 1,249</i>	<i>- 1,451</i>	<i>- 1,148</i>
			- 1,209

In original terms, merchandise exports rose 1 per cent due to a \$61 million rise in non-rural exports. Rural exports fell \$7 million.

For non-rural exports, the most significant rise was recorded in transport equipment, up \$53 million or 25 per cent. The largest fall was recorded in 'other' metals, down \$61 million or 16 per cent.

Falls in meat, sugar, wool and 'other' rural exports totalling \$115 million were almost offset by a \$108 million increase in cereals exports.

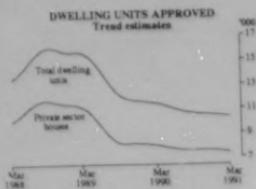
Merchandise imports fell \$321 million, or 8 per cent, in original terms, with falls recorded for most commodity groups. The largest falls were in civil aircraft, down \$164 million or 76 per cent (reflecting the import of one aircraft valued at \$51 million compared with two, worth \$215 million, in the previous month); manufactures, down \$92 million or 11 per cent (due largely to falls in apparel and clothing accessories and non-metallic minerals manufactures); and fuels, down \$81 million or 26 per cent.

In original terms, the surplus on merchandise trade for the first nine months of 1990-91 was \$649 million, representing a turnaround from a deficit of \$4,173 million for the same period of 1989-90.

The current account deficit for the first nine months of 1990-91 was \$13,364 million, compared with \$17,580 million for the nine months to March 1990.

*For further information, order the publication Balance of Payments, Australia (5301.0), or contact Zia Abbasi on (06) 252 6689.*

## Housing approvals continue to fall



Total dwelling unit approvals fell by 2.5 per cent, in seasonally adjusted terms, between February and March 1991 with private sector house approvals falling by 4.2 per cent.

The decline in March followed similar falls in both total dwelling units and private sector house approvals in February.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics trend series for total dwelling units approved continued the decline which began in March 1989. The trend series for private sector house approvals is again showing a slight decline following earlier indications of levelling out.

### DWELLING UNITS APPROVED, MARCH 1991

	Private sector houses		Total dwelling units	
	No.	Percentage change on previous month	No.	Percentage change on previous month
Original	6,932	0.0	9,770	-0.9
Seasonally adjusted	7,219	-4.2	10,210	-2.5
Trend estimate	7,430	-0.8	10,361	-0.2

The value of total building approved (residential and non-residential) fell by 26.6 per cent from the high February 1991 figure of \$2,211.9 million to \$1,622.6 million in March 1991 (seasonally adjusted), and was 19.3 per cent lower than the March 1990 figure.

The trend series for the value of total building approved, which was showing a slight upward movement last month because of the unusually high value of non-residential building approved in February, is now flat. The trend series for the value of non-residential building approved, which is only available to December 1990, shows a continuation of the decline evident since the beginning of 1990.

For further information, order the publication *Building Approvals, Australia* (8731.0), or contact Paul Seville on (06) 252 6067.

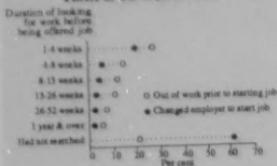
## Exports in brief ...

Australia's major exports for February 1991 and their principal markets were:

- coal (excluding coke and briquettes) (\$559m): Japan (50%), the Republic of Korea (12%) and Taiwan (7%);
- non-monetary gold (\$341m): Singapore (42%), Japan (28%) and Switzerland (11%);
- wool (\$237m): Japan (23%), Italy (22%) and the Republic of Korea (9%);
- iron-ore (\$187m): Japan (54%), China (13%) and the Republic of Korea (12%).

## More than 1.8 million jobs started in 1989-90

### PERSONS WHO STARTED A JOB IN THE YEAR ENDING JULY 1990



A total of 1,880,300 persons started a job for wages or salary in the twelve months to July 1990, of whom 63 per cent had started a full-time job.

Of the total number, 1,069,000 had been out of work before starting their job, while 811,300 changed employer to start the job.

There were a further 515,600 persons who had looked for, but not started, a job for wages or salary in the last year.

Of those who changed employer to start their new job, 18 per cent spent 4 weeks or more looking for work. For those who were out of work prior to starting their job, 51 per cent were in this category.

These findings are among the results of an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey conducted in association with the regular monthly labour force survey in July 1990.

The survey also shows that, of the persons who started a job for wages or salary:

- 40 per cent approached the employer to obtain a job they knew was available
- 35 per cent obtained their job by approaching the employer, without knowing that the job was available
- 25 per cent were employed as a result of the employer approaching the jobseeker
- 87 per cent had worked before
- 71 per cent of those who started a part-time job were females.

Persons who changed employer to start their job were far more likely to be working in their preferred occupation (81%) than those who were out of work prior to starting the job (63%).

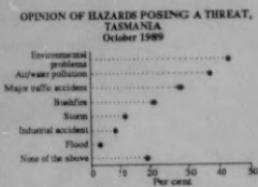
*For further information, order the publication *Successful and Unsuccessful Job Search Experience, Australia (6245.0)*, or contact Sue Doyle on (06) 252 7204.*

## Industrial disputes in brief ...

In January 1991 there were 75 industrial disputes reported in progress, involving 10,700 employees and resulting in the loss of 17,200 working days. The number of disputes has increased by 15 compared to December 1990, although working days lost has decreased by 16,900 from 34,100 to 17,200.

*Source: Industrial Disputes, Australia, January 1991 (6321.0).*

## What bedevils Tasmanians



Tasmanians felt more threatened by artificial hazards than by naturally occurring ones at the time of a survey conducted in October 1989.

Approximately 43 per cent of adults were concerned with environmental hazards such as ozone depletion and soil degradation. As well, 37 per cent were concerned about air and water pollution, and 28 per cent about a major traffic accident. By comparison, the survey found that 21 per cent thought bushfires posed a threat to themselves or their families, while storms (12%) and floods (3%) received relatively low ratings.

The broad-ranging survey covered topics including preparedness to call ambulances; the numbers undertaking cardio pulmonary resuscitation courses; the use of fire prevention devices by households; bushfire awareness; and community attitudes to crime.

On attitudes to crime the survey found that an estimated 78 per cent of people thought that crime was a major concern in Tasmania. The level of concern among those people about different types of crime is shown in the following table. One striking result is the absence of community concern about white collar crime.

PERSONS WHO BELIEVE THAT CRIME IS A MAJOR CONCERN, TASMANIA  
Per cent

Crime problem of most concern	Age (years)			Total
	Under 30	30-64	Over 64	
Theft/burglary	41	42	45	42
Drug usage	11	14	10	13
Physical assault	11	14	9	12
Dangerous/drink driving	16	10	9	12
Vandalism	4	7	8	7
Sexual assault	7	6	2	5
Child abuse	5	2	6	3
Murder	0	2	4	2
White collar crime	0	0	0	0
Other	5	4	6	4
Total	100	100	100	100

Thirty-one per cent of those surveyed said that their neighbourhood had particular crime or nuisance problems — 30 per cent of these were concerned with housebreaking. An estimated 12,200 households (or 7% of all households) were involved with the Neighbourhood Watch program.

The survey also showed that 21 per cent of households had at least one fire extinguisher and 7 per cent had smoke detectors.

For further information, order the publication Emergency Services Awareness and Attitudes to Crime, Tasmania (4511.6), or contact Chris Carswell on (002) 20 5851.

## Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of statistical information:

- through its bookshops
- by mail order (including subscription)
- by facsimile
- electronically.

To order any of the publications that appear in *Statistics Weekly* or to inquire about the statistics and services available from the ABS, contact Information Services at any of the offices listed below. An Information Consultancy Service in each office provides assistance of a more extensive or complex nature.

### ABS Central Office

PO BOX 10  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616  
**Tel** (06) 252 6627  
**Fax** (06) 253 1404

### ABS State Offices

**NSW** (02) 268 4611  
**Vic.** (03) 615 7000  
**Qld** (07) 222 6351  
**WA** (09) 323 5140  
**SA** (08) 237 7100  
**Tas.** (002) 20 5800  
**NT** (089) 81 3456

### Subscriptions

To subscribe to *Statistics Weekly* or any other ABS printed publication, phone the ABS Subscription Service toll-free on (008) 020608, or contact Information Services at any of the offices above.

### Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

Robert Nixon  
Editor  
*Statistics Weekly*  
(06) 252 6104

## All the week's releases: 1 to 7 May

### General

*Statistics Weekly*, 2 May 1991 (1318.0; \$4.00)  
*Economic Indicators*, Vic., April 1991 (1307.2; \$6.00)

### Social statistics

Reissue: *First Home Buyers*, Aust., 1988 to 1990, Preliminary (4135.0; free)  
*Law and Order*, Qld, 1989-90, Summary (4501.3; \$4.50)

### National accounts, finance and foreign trade

*Australian National Accounts: Gross Product, Employment and Hours Worked*, 1989-90 (5211.0; \$12.50) — *final issue*  
*Balance of Payments*, Aust., March 1991 (5301.0; \$15.00)  
*Exports*, Aust., Monthly Summary Tables, February 1991 (5432.0; \$9.00)  
*Commercial Finance*, Aust., February 1991 (5643.0; \$5.50)  
*State Estimates of Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure to June 1992*, December Qtr 1990 Survey (5646.0; \$10.00)  
*Authorised Dealers and Money Market Corporations: Assets, Liabilities, Income and Expenditure*, Aust., 1989-90 (5650.0; \$10.00) — *final issue*  
*Local Government Finance*, SA, 1989-90 (5502.4; \$10.00)

### Labour statistics and prices

*The Labour Force*, Aust., March 1991 (6203.0; \$14.50)  
*Successful and Unsuccessful Job Search Experience*, Aust., July 1990 (6245.0; \$11.50)  
*Employed Wage and Salary Earners*, Aust., December Qtr 1990 (6248.0; \$14.50)  
*Industrial Disputes*, Aust., January 1991 (6321.0; \$7.00)  
*The Labour Force*, Vic., February 1991 (6202.2; \$9.50)

### Agriculture

*Crops and Pastures*, Qld, 1989-90 (7321.3; \$17.50)

### Secondary industry and distribution

*Manufacturing Production*, Aust.: Household Appliances and Electrical Equipment, February 1991 (8357.0; \$6.50)  
*Manufacturing Production*, Aust.: Clothing and Footwear, February 1991 (8358.0; \$10.00)  
*Manufacturing Production*, Aust.: Fibres, Yarns, Fabrics, Bedding and Floor Coverings, February 1991 (8360.0; \$10.00)  
*Manufacturing Production*, Aust.: Building Materials and Fittings, February 1991 (8361.0; \$6.50)  
*Manufacturing Production*, Aust.: Plastics, Rubber, Paints, Detergents and Industrial Chemicals, February 1991 (8362.0; \$6.50)  
*Sales of Australian Wine and Brandy by Winemakers*, March 1991 (8504.0; \$10.00)  
*Building Approvals*, Aust., March 1991 (8731.0; \$12.50)  
*Building Approvals*, NSW, March 1991 (8731.1; \$10.00)  
*Tourist Accommodation*, Vic., December Qtr 1990 (8635.2; \$10.00)  
*Building Approvals*, WA, March 1991 (8731.5; \$10.00)  
*Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities*, WA, February 1991 (8741.5; \$10.00)  
*Building Approvals*, NT, March 1991 (8731.7; \$5.50)

## Calendar of key releases

Expected releases over the fortnight to 21 May 1991

May

9 The Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary, April 1991  
(6202.0; \$10.00)

The Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary Data on Floppy Disk,  
April 1991 (6271.0; \$65.00)

15 Consumer Price Index, March 1991 (6401.0; \$11.00)

21 Private New Capital Expenditure, Australia, Actual and  
Expected Expenditure to June 1992, March 1991 Survey,  
Preliminary (5625.0; \$10.00)

## The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to  
7 May 1991



	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (Dec. qtr 90)*	-2.4	-28.6	-15.3	-11.7	2.8	39.0	n.a.	n.a.	-8.6
Retail turnover (Feb. 91) (trend estimate)	3.4	-2.4	4.6	8.8	2.2	6.3	n.a.	9.5	2.8
New motor vehicle registrations (Mar. 91)†	-20.2	-58.9	-9.0	-13.7	-20.5	-28.0	-29.3	-24.1	-29.8
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Mar. 91)	-19.7	-40.7	-10.4	9.2	-23.0	-12.7	-25.9	-75.6	-20.7
Value of total building work done (Dec. qtr 90)	2.5	-11.1	-23.0	9.6	-25.5	-24.7	11.4	5.3	-8.5
Employed persons (Mar. 91)*	-0.4	-4.0	-1.5	-0.1	-1.8	-0.3	-0.5	5.3	-1.6
Capital city consumer price index (Dec. qtr 90)	6.4	7.4	6.2	7.8	7.4	6.1	7.1	6.8	6.9
Average weekly earnings (full- time adult ordinary time) (Nov. 90)	6.8	7.1	9.9	8.3	7.9	6.6	9.8	8.7	7.5
Population (Sept. 90)	1.1	1.4	2.4	1.1	2.3	1.1	0.9	2.5	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc (Sept. qtr 90)	3.2	0.1	6.5	1.8	0.8	23.5	7.4	20.9	4.2

\* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

# The latest ...

Key national indicators - consolidated to 7 May 1991

	Period	Latest figure available		Percentage change (a) on	
		Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year
<b>National production</b>					
Gross domestic product	— current prices	\$m	Dec. qtr 90	101,082	95,247
	— 1984-85 prices			70,031	64,725
New capital expenditure	— current prices	\$m	Dec. qtr 90	7,305	6,612
	— 1984-85 prices			5,542	5,021
Expected new capital expenditure			Three months to		
		"	Dec. 90	8,311	n.a.
Retail turnover	— current prices	"	Feb. 91	5,365	7,250
New motor vehicle registrations	— 1984-85 prices	"	Dec. qtr 90	16,480	14,620
Dwelling unit approvals		no.	Mar. 91	39,880	39,077
Value of all building approvals		\$m	Mar. 91	9,770	10,210
Value of total building work done		"		1,522	1,623
— current prices		"	Dec. qtr 90	7,391	7,069
	— 1984-85 prices	"		4,654	4,452
Manufacturers' sales	— current prices	"	Dec. qtr 90	36,754	35,064
	— 1984-85 prices	"		25,318	24,154
Expected manufacturers' sales			Six months to		
		"	June 91	70,139	n.a.
<b>Labour</b>					
Employed persons (e)	"000	Mar. 91	7,746.5	7,710.1	-1.1
Unemployment rate (e)	%	"	9.6	9.2	0.5
Participation rate (e)	"	"	63.8	63.2	-0.4
Job vacancies	"000	Nov. 90	34.1	35.4	-27.8
Average weekly overtime per employee	hours	"	1.3	1.3	-1.9
<b>Prices, profits and wages</b>					
Consumer price index	1980-81 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 90	214.5	n.a.	6.9
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984-85 = 100.0	Feb. 91	121.5	n.a.	0.6
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry	1988-89 = 100.0	Feb. 91	119.3	n.a.	-0.5
Company profits before income tax	\$m	Dec. qtr 90	4,640	3,911	4.0
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)	\$	Nov. 90	555.60	n.a.	4.8
<b>Interest rates (b) (monthly average)</b>					
90-day bank bills †	% per annum	Mar. 91	11.60	n.a.	-0.05
10-year Treasury bonds †		"	11.40	n.a.	0.15
<b>Balance of payments</b>					
Exports of merchandise	\$m	Mar. 91	4,300	4,477	1.2
Imports of merchandise	"	"	3,658	3,862	-9.6
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"	"	642	615	299.4
Balance of goods and services (c)	"	"	388	231	n.a.
Balance on current account (c)	"	"	-1,148	-1,209	42.0
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 90	n.a.	97.9	-5.8
<b>Foreign investment</b>					
Net foreign debt	\$m	30 Dec. 90	130,889	n.a.	1.5
Net foreign liabilities	"	"	173,678	n.a.	6.0
<b>Exchange rates (monthly average)</b>					
SUS	per \$A	Mar. 91	0.7719	n.a.	-1.6
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0	"	58.2	n.a.	1.6
<b>Other indicators</b>					
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million	Sept. 90	17.1	n.a.	0.4
Overseas visitor arrivals	"000	Oct. 90	191	188	-1.4

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures expected to be released Thursday, 9 May 1991.

NOTES: † = change is expressed in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available. Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6). Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

The ABS should be acknowledged as the source when reproducing or quoting any part of this publication.